



NEWS RELEASE

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Infant Immunization Week Observed in North Dakota
Department of Health Urges All North Dakota Children To Receive Immunizations

BISMARCK, N.D. - Governor John Hoeven has proclaimed April 25 through May 1, 2004, as *Infant Immunization Week* in North Dakota.

Vaccination: An Act of Love. Love Them, Protect Them, Immunize Them is the theme of this year's campaign, which focuses on immunizing infants against 12 diseases by age 2.

"Because immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious diseases, I urge parents to make sure their children are up-to-date on their shots," said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. "Immunizations protect families and communities. Children who are not immunized increase the chance that others will get the disease."

"Each year, about 8,000 babies are born in North Dakota, and all need to be immunized," said Heather Weaver, manager of the North Dakota Immunization Program. "North Dakota physicians should talk with parents about why immunizations are important and be willing to answer questions about vaccines. They should use every visit as an opportunity to vaccinate and should follow-up with reminders to parents when immunizations are due."

Infant Immunization Week is also a time to make sure that all North Dakota children are up-to-date on their immunizations for school and daycare. As of Jan. 1, 2004, chickenpox (varicella) vaccine is required for all North Dakota children attending early childhood facilities. Chickenpox vaccine also is required for kindergarten entry for the 2004-2005 school year.

"Parents and caregivers need to take responsibility for their child's vaccinations," Dwelle said. "That is why they should contact their child's private provider or local public health unit to check the status of their child's immunization record or to make an appointment for their child to be immunized."

For more information about *Infant Immunization Week*, contact the North Dakota Immunization Program at 701.328.3386 or toll-free at 800.472.2180.

- 30 -

PROCLAMATION
INFANT IMMUNIZATION WEEK
April 25 through May 1, 2004

WHEREAS, vaccines are among the 20th Century's most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death; and

WHEREAS, national immunization levels are at or near record highs for most vaccines, and most vaccine-preventable diseases have been reduced by 99 percent or more since the introduction of vaccines; and

WHEREAS, immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious diseases; and

WHEREAS, North Dakota children need a series of vaccinations, starting at birth, to be fully protected against 12 potentially serious diseases, and particular attention must be paid to the importance of proper immunization for infants and toddlers age 2 and younger; and

WHEREAS, public and private health-care providers, parents and caregivers are encouraged to ensure that all children receive immunizations by the age of 2, and all North Dakotans are urged to spread the immunization message throughout their communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim April 25 through May 1, 2004, as **INFANT IMMUNIZATION WEEK** in the state of North Dakota

John Hoeven
Governor

